**UPDATED CONFERENCE SCHEDULE**

**Tuesday Sept 1st 2026**
**The Pavillion, 115 New Cavendish St**
**University of Westminster, London W1W 6UW**

**10.00 ARRIVE**

Coffee, tea and pastries welcome

**10.20 MORNING SESSIONS CHAIRED BY TINA CARTWRIGHT**

10.20 Introduction: **Alan Porter**, Head of Social Sciences, University of Westminster.

10.30-11.20 Keynote: **Brendan Gough**, Leeds Beckett University.

*Affective masculinities: How do men enact vulnerability amid competing gender norms?*

11.20-11.35 **Josephine Jacobi** (Sigmund Freud Private University Berlin)

*Embodied Distress Behind Bars: Masculinity, Steroid Use and Psychological Counselling with Men in Prison.*

**11.35 BREAK**

**11.45 15-MINUTE PRESENTATIONS – CHAIRED BY ALISON FIXSEN**

11.45-12.00 **Christina Wilkins** (University of Birmingham)

*Masculinity and Mental Illness Onscreen*

12.00-12.15 **Justine Krygier** (The University of Hull)

*"It's an attack on your manhood" - navigating multimorbidity at midlife.*

12.15-12.30 **Linda Thomas et. al.** (University of Stirling)

*"Making me feel like a dad again"*: *A father-Child Programme and Fatherhood Identity in Scottish Prisons*.

12.30-12.45 **Sam Conniff** (*Hard As Nails, London, UK & Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, UK)*

*The Expectation Gap: A Live Demonstration and Mixed-Methods Evidence From a Norm-Breaking Community Intervention That Shifted Men's Attitudes Toward Empathy, Vulnerability, and Allyship*.

*Daniele Fiandaca (Hard as Nails) will be painting men's nails over lunch to demonstrate firsthand themes from this talk*

**12.45 – 1.30 HOT LUNCH, POSTERS & VISIBLE SYSTEMS EXHIBITION: ROOM C1.15**

**EXHIBITION**

**Andrew Groves** (University of Westminster)

*Visible Systems - How menswear governs, frames, and performs masculinity*.

**LIST OF POSTER PRESENTATIONS**:

**Suen Yiu Tung et al.** (The Chinese University of Hong Kong): *Effects of gay community stress on self-objectification and psychological distress among sexual minority men in Hong Kong*.

**Dida G. Heilmann** (University of Greenland): *Studying Masculinity through Visual Sociology*

**Guillermo León Ramírez-Martínez & Guillermo García-Meraz** (Universidad Iberoamericana): *An approach to the construction of masculine identities that diverge from hegemony in Mexico*.

**Youssouf Ousman & Thseen Nazir** (Global Studies University): *Loneliness among University Students as a Growing Concern*.

**Amos Nimni** (Bar Ilan University) *Embodied Masculinity after Sexual Trauma*

**1.30 15-MINUTE PRESENTATIONS – CHAIRED BY TOM NADARZYNSKI**

1.30-1.45 **David Smith** (Robert Gordon University)

*"I want to be normal like everyone else": Virginity loss and developmental masculinity among incels*

1.45-2.00 **Jason Luger** (Northumbria University)

*When Extremism Threatens the Gym Sharks: Young Men [En]Countering Hate in Fitness Spaces*

2.00-2.15 **Eduardo Azevedo Rebouças** (Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM), Brazil)

*Between Automatism and Care: Masculinities, Gender-Based Violence and Reflexive Groups in Brazil.*

2.15-2.30 **Samantha King** & **Gavin Weedon** (Queen's University, Canada & Nottingham Trent University)

*Metabolizing Masculinity: Supplementation and Renewal in Men's Fitness Culture*

**2.30 BREAK**

**2.50 PARALLEL SESSION: FIVE-MINUTE UPDATES & QUESTIONS IN THE PAVILLION – CHAIRED BY ALISON FIXSEN**

**Michael J. Rovito & James E. Leone** (University of Central Florida) – (Virtual and/or in-person)

*From Amour-Propre to Amour de Soi: Rousseau as a Guide for Modern Masculinities*

**Tina Cartwright** (University of Westminster)

*Tailoring yoga for men's mental health: Development and pilot findings from Yoga4Men*

**Nicholas Norman Adams & Thanos Karatzias** (Robert Gordon University & Edinburgh Napier University)

*Speaking Through Silence: Masculinity, Complex Trauma, and the Hidden Communication of Distress in Men*

**James Kempley** (University of Westminster)

*Navigating Modern Masculinities: Initial Findings from a Qualitative Interview Study of Young Men in the UK*

**Grace Farmer** (The London School of Economics & Political Science)

*'Crushing "College Bros" and "Female Libs": The Construction of Masculinities and Femininities in Charlie Kirk's Campus Debate Videos'*

**Alex Caton-Bradley et al.** (Bournemouth University)

*A Little More Conversation, A Little Less Theory Please: An Inductive Qualitative Study of Young Men's Perceptions of Masculinity*

**2.50pm PARALLEL SESSION IN C1.15**

**Chantal Gautier & Nikolaos Souvlakis**: Q& A - Men, Sex and Intimacy: Beyond Performance, Pressure and Shame.

**3.35 BREAK**

**3.45 PANEL DISCUSSION – LOOKING AHEAD – CHAIRED BY DAMIEN RIDGE**

**Paul Galdas**, Chair of the *Men's Health Academic Network*, the national body advising Government on implementation of the new *Men's Health Strategy for England*.

**Jerome Evans**, former student at University of Westminster.

**William Phypers-Ward**, current student at University of Westminster.

**Eduardo Lees**, Head of Global Mobility & Co-chair of the Q+ (LGBTQ+) Network , University of Westminster & volunteer with Southwark Youth Justice Service.

**Fiona McQueen**, Scottish Healthy Masculinities Alliance & Edinburgh Napier University

**Bryan Bonaparte**, inductee, Martin Luther King Jr Collegium of Scholars at Morehouse College, Atlanta: Providing perspectives on intersectionality, colonisation and black male experiences of weaponisation.

**Tom Nadarzynski**, Reader in Digital Health Psychology, University of Westminster: Providing perspectives on AI and therapy approaches relevant to men.

**5.00 CLOSE**

# Modern Masculinities Conference

## Abstracts

University of Westminster · 1 September 2026

## Abstracts (Alphabetical by First Presenter)

### Speaking Through Silence: Masculinity, Complex Trauma, and the Hidden Communication of Distress in Men

Nicholas Norman Adams & Thanos Karatzias
*Robert Gordon University & Edinburgh Napier University*

**5-minute update**

Men are less likely to seek support for psychological distress and often experience trauma through forms that remain unrecognised by both services and those around them. Rather than expressing vulnerability directly, distress may be communicated through silence, emotional withdrawal, overwork, anger, risk-taking, substance use, or the performance of self-reliance. These responses can function as adaptive strategies for survival while simultaneously creating barriers to recognition and recovery. Drawing on over a decade of research exploring men, masculinities, trauma, and mental health, this brief update spotlights how masculine norms shape experiences of Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (C-PTSD), help-seeking, and engagement with care. It introduces the Mapping, Interpreting, Modulating, Integrating and Co-constructing (MIMIC) framework, recently developed for psychologists and psychiatrists working with men experiencing PTSD and C-PTSD. Moving beyond simplistic 'media' accounts of masculinity as inherently problematic, the presentation explores how masculine identities can operate as both protective resources and barriers to recovery. Combining empirical evidence, clinical insights, and lived-experience perspectives, it argues for more nuanced, gender-informed approaches to trauma care that recognise the often-hidden ways men communicate distress and create more effective pathways into support and recovery.

### Tailoring yoga for men's mental health: Development and pilot findings from Yoga4Men (Yoga4Men)

Tina Cartwright, Nina Smyth, Lucy Doyle, Maria Flynn & Damien Ridge
*University of Westminster*

**5-minute update**

Men are less likely than women to access conventional mental health support, reflecting barriers including stigma, restrictive masculine norms and perceptions that existing services do not address their needs. Yoga can offer an accessible route to supporting mental health through movement, breathwork, relaxation and social connection. However, its cultural positioning as a predominantly feminine activity may reduce its perceived relevance and acceptability among men.

Developed in partnership with the Yoga in Healthcare Alliance, Yoga4Men was adapted from an established social prescribing programme and tailored to men's priorities and lived experiences. Young men contributed to the programme's development and delivery. The eight-week, male-led programme was designed around outcomes identified as important to men, including resilience, physical and mental wellbeing, connection and self-awareness.

A pilot trial with 21 ethnically diverse male university students examined programme acceptability and preliminary psychosocial and physiological outcomes. Large effect sizes were observed for improvements in wellbeing, fatigue and loneliness and healthier cortisol patterns following the yoga programme for the intervention group. Participants reported high enjoyment and acceptability, and described using breathing techniques to manage stress, reporting greater calm, control and establishment of healthier routines.

These preliminary findings support the acceptability and potential value of a tailored yoga intervention to support men's wellbeing. Ongoing patient and public involvement is informing

further refinement of the programme with a broader and more diverse population of men. This will inform community delivery with underserved and socioeconomically diverse groups through social prescribing pathways, alongside a future feasibility evaluation.

## A Little More Conversation, A Little Less Theory Please: An Inductive Qualitative Study of Young Men's Perceptions of Masculinity

Alex Caton-Bradley, Reece Bush-Evans, Alex Fry & Ala Yankouskaya
*Bournemouth University*

**Poster**

Context:

Although masculinity has been widely theorised, a proliferation of frameworks has created a methodological problem by pre-structuring what researchers look for and how data are interpreted. Comparatively fewer studies have inductively examined how young men define and negotiate masculinity in the modern world.

Aim:

This study aims to identify the lived meanings and narratives through which masculinity is experienced and expressed by young men. This is particularly relevant during early adulthood, a period currently characterised by intensive social media use, the social consequences of COVID-19, and changing societal expectations.

Methods:

An inductive qualitative design grounded in a lived-experience perspective was employed to examine how masculinity is understood, enacted, and negotiated in everyday contexts. The study prioritises participants' accounts as the primary source of conceptual development. Semi-structured one-hour interviews a were conducted with 29 men aged 18-24 (M=21.47) between February and April 2026, online and in-person. Sampling was opportunistic and purposive to capture demographic variation through social media recruitment and established community networks. Interviews focused on personal definitions, social influences, and experiences of masculinity across contexts.

Results:

Reflexive Thematic Analysis identified masculinity as a multidimensional and actively negotiated construct. Participants described masculinity as both internally driven and socially shaped, with pressure often self-imposed through perceived expectations. Men report ongoing tension between traditional norms like protectiveness and contemporary expectations around emotional openness, particularly in relation changing standards of dependability and vulnerability.

Conclusion:

This study advances understanding of masculinity in early adulthood by grounding conceptual development in young men's own experiences whilst treating theoretical saturation within masculinity research as an empirical problem in its own right. The findings indicate the need for context-sensitive and evidence-based approaches when examining masculinity and can provide a basis for developing measures that reflect contemporary social conditions, including diverse and marginalised groups.

## The Expectation Gap: A Live Demonstration and Mixed-Methods Evidence From a Norm-Breaking Community Intervention That Shifted Men's Attitudes Toward Empathy, Vulnerability, and Allyship

Sam Conniff[1] and Brendan Gough[2]

*1 Hard As Nails, London, UK; 2 Leeds Beckett University, Leeds, UK*

**15-minute presentation (and live demonstration)**

**Context**

Interventions targeting restrictive masculine norms predominantly rely on educational or therapeutic modalities delivered in controlled settings. Community-based approaches operating in real-world social environments remain underrepresented. Hard As Nails (HAN) is a UK community intervention in which men have their nails painted—at public nail salons or at home by partners and family—and document their psychological and social experiences during a one-to-two-week active period and subsequent follow-up.

**Aim**

To present mixed-methods evidence from the HAN intervention and offer delegates a first-person encounter with the Expectation Gap mechanism through a live interactive demonstration.

**Methods**

Mixed-methods quasi-experimental design across two pilots (N = 422). Pilot 2 (n = 402) employed pre-post-follow-up assessment with validated instruments (Man in a Box Scale, CMNI-22, SITES) and a waitlist control group (n = 50). Qualitative data comprised 195 research diaries, anonymised WhatsApp group conversations (N = 118), and three focus groups (n = 18). Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was applied across data sources. Longitudinal follow-up was conducted at six weeks and nine months.

**Key Findings**

Significant movement away from restrictive norm endorsement was observed at immediate post-assessment ($p = .010$) and strengthened at six-week follow-up ($p = .004$). Empathy gains emerged at six weeks ($p = .013$) and persisted at nine months. An 88% behavioural persistence rate was recorded. The study's core finding—the "Expectation Gap"—revealed that participants reporting the highest initial resistance demonstrated the largest positive shifts ($d = 0.404$, $p = .034$).

**Interactive Session Format**

We propose a hybrid research presentation and live experiential demonstration. Hard as Nails co-founder, Daniele Fiandaca will be positioned at the front of the room with open chairs. During the presentation, male delegates will be invited to sit and have their nails painted while the quantitative and qualitative findings are presented around them. This format has been tested at a previous conference (World Experience Organisation), where it produced a powerful real-time encounter with the intervention's mechanism: audience members watched volunteers mentally scrolling through their coming week—meetings, school pick-ups, social encounters—and confronting the Expectation Gap in real time. The live element transforms a standard paper presentation into a felt, embodied experience of the research being reported, providing a direct through-line to Professor Gough's keynote on affective masculinities and embodied practice.

**Contribution/Implications**

This study provides rare mixed-methods, longitudinal evidence for a community-based masculinity intervention conducted entirely in real-world settings. The Expectation Gap finding has direct implications for intervention design: maximising the discrepancy between expectation and experience may be more effective than minimising discomfort. The interactive format extends this insight from data to direct experience, offering delegates a first-person encounter with the mechanism described in Professor Gough's (2018) work on embodied masculinities.

## Crushing "College Bros" and "Female Libs": The Construction of Masculinities and Femininities in Charlie Kirk's Campus Debate Videos

Grace Farmer
*The London School of Economics & Political Science*
**5-minute update**

Charlie Kirk was a right-wing social media personality with significant political, social, and cultural influence. His organisations continue to work within schools and universities to ideological ends. Whilst there has been increasing scholarship on the manosphere and political influencers, there is a gap in the literature to address in how norms of masculinity and femininity are constructed through debate videos specifically. This project uses language and video media analysis to explore how hegemonic and subordinated masculinities and femininities are constructed in Kirk's 'college campus' debate videos. By looking at Kirk's physical set up and use of public space, the images used for thumbnails, violent language and identifying characteristic within video titles, and references to emotion and 'fact,' I illuminate pertinent issues of gender construction. I find that these features enable Kirk to construct a violent, dominating, and rational hegemonic masculinity as opposed to a subordinated and feminised alternative which he associates with women, queer people, racialised minorities, and the political left more generally. My project draws on existing work on masculinities and femininities, affect theory, silencing, communication and argumentation and metapolitics for a theoretical framework. This is important work in understanding how social media personalities can construct and perpetuate polarising and exclusive norms of masculinity and femininity to an impressionable and often young audience.

## Men, Sex and Intimacy: Beyond Performance, Pressure and Shame

Chantal Gautier & Nikolaos Souvlakis
*University of Westminster*
**Questions & Answers Session**

**Chantal Gautier** is a Chartered Psychologist and Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Westminster and an accredited sex and relationship therapist. She teaches clinical sexology and works with individuals and couples experiencing concerns around sexual functioning, desire, pornography, communication and intimacy. Her compassionate, inclusive approach challenges narrow ideas of sexual "performance" and supports people to experience sex and relationships without pressure, judgement or shame.

**Dr Nikolaos Souvlakis** is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Westminster, Chartered Psychologist, psychoanalytic psychotherapist and accredited Gender, Sex and Relationship Diversity therapist. Drawing on more than 20 years of clinical experience, his work explores sexuality, identity, relationships and emotional life across diverse cultures, genders and sexualities, including research into chemsex. He brings a psychodynamic, affirming and trauma-informed perspective to understanding the deeper anxieties, expectations and vulnerabilities that can shape men's experiences of sex and intimacy.

## Affective masculinities: How do men enact vulnerability amid competing gender norms?

Brendan Gough
*Leeds Beckett University*
**Keynote Address**

Professor Brendan Gough is a critical social psychologist and leading scholar of men and masculinities, working from Leeds Beckett University, where he is Professor of Social Psychology and Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. His extensive qualitative research explores how gender norms shape men's identities, emotions, bodies, relationships, health and wellbeing, including men's experiences of mental distress, infertility, body image and changing expectations of masculinity. He has published more than 150 research outputs and is the author of *Contemporary Masculinities: Embodiment, Emotion and Wellbeing*. A Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and member of the Government's Men's Health Academic Network, his keynote will examine how men negotiate vulnerability amid persistent and competing gender norms.

## Visible Systems - How menswear governs, frames, and performs masculinity.

Andrew Groves
*University of Westminster*
**Exhibition**

*Visible Systems* explores how menswear is used to produce, regulate and make a range of masculinities socially legible. Drawing on the Westminster Menswear Archive, the exhibition brings together a small group of garments and objects ranging from designer clothing and military uniforms to institutional dress and personal protective equipment. Together, they reveal the systems in which menswear operates and how those systems shape the ways bodies are seen, classified and understood.

Andrew Groves is Professor of Menswear Systems at the University of Westminster and Director of the Westminster Menswear Archive, the UK's leading research collection devoted to the material, industrial and cultural history of menswear. His research approaches menswear not simply as fashion, but as a system of clothing, standards, institutions and behaviours through which bodies are organised, classified and made socially legible. He founded the Archive in 2016, and its collection of more than 3,000 garments spans designer fashion, workwear, uniforms, sportswear, technical clothing and everyday dress. His exhibition, *Visible Systems: How Menswear Governs, Frames and Performs Masculinity*, explores how clothing participates in producing and regulating masculinity, authority, labour and identity.

## Studying Masculinity through Visual Sociology: Exploring Photovoice and Photo-Elicitation among Young Greenlandic Men

Dida G. Heilmann
*Ilisimatusarfik – University of Greenland*
**Poster**

Research on young men in Greenland has often focused on social challenges such as educational inequalities, marginalization and vulnerability. Less attention has been paid to how young men themselves understand and negotiate masculinity, care, belonging and identity in their everyday lives. This PhD project addresses this gap by exploring the everyday experiences of young Greenlandic men through a combination of visual sociology and qualitative methods. Drawing on photovoice, photo-elicitation, interviews and participant observation, the project examines how masculinity is practiced, negotiated and embodied in contemporary Greenland. The paper discusses the methodological potential of visual approaches for studying masculinity in Arctic and

Indigenous contexts. Visual methods enable participants to actively contribute to knowledge production and may provide access to embodied, relational and affective dimensions of experience that are not always easily articulated through language alone. Attention is given to the concept of tacit knowledge and to how photographs can facilitate reflection on identity, belonging and everyday practices. The project is theoretically informed by masculinity studies, care theory and Indigenous and postcolonial perspectives. By combining visual sociology with research on masculinity, the study seeks to contribute both empirically and methodologically to emerging discussions of modern masculinities in Arctic contexts.

### Embodied Distress Behind Bars: Masculinity, Steroid Use and Psychological Counselling with Men in Prison

Josephine Jacobi
*Sigmund Freud Private University Berlin*

**15-minute presentation**

This presentation takes a practitioner-informed perspective on masculinity, distress and anabolic steroid use in prison. It emerges from psychological counselling work with men in custody, where questions of bodily transformation, strength, shame, fear and vulnerability repeatedly surfaced in conversations about identity, coping and survival. Rather than approaching steroid use solely as individual risk behaviour, the paper asks how it may function as an embodied and relational response to the social, emotional and institutional conditions of imprisonment. Prison is a highly masculinised environment in which safety, status and belonging are often negotiated through the body. From a counselling perspective, the muscular body can appear as both protection and performance: a way of managing insecurity, asserting control and gaining recognition, while also concealing distress, dependency and unmet needs for care. Steroid use therefore raises broader questions about men's mental health, help-seeking and the dif culty of articulating vulnerability in settings where emotional exposure may be experienced as dangerous. The presentation draws on professional practice in prison-based psychological counselling as well as an ongoing doctoral project using qualitative research with affected men. It explores how lived experience and practice-based observations can inform research questions and contribute to more nuanced understandings of masculinity, risk and psychosocial support. By connecting counselling practice with critical perspectives on men's mental health, the paper argues that anabolic steroid use in prison offers a lens through which to examine how male distress may be enacted, displaced or hidden behind performances of strength.

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### Navigating Modern Masculinities: Initial Findings from a Qualitative Interview Study of Young Men in the UK

James Kempley
*University of Westminster*

**5-minute update**

Context: There is growing public interest in masculinities, particularly regarding concerns over the influence of digital culture, the manosphere, and the competing pressures young men face in terms of their wellbeing, identity, and broader social issues (e.g., increasing politicisation of gender relations). However, despite public interest, qualitative research that allows young men to speak to these issues on their own terms is limited.

Aim: The present study sought to explore the lived experiences and worldviews of young men aged 18-30, with a particular focus placed on masculinity, wellbeing, relationships, and the influence of social and digital culture.

Methods: A qualitative study utilising semi-structured online interviews of approximately 60-90 minutes. Participants thus far have been recruited from within the UK, the focus on this

presentation. Future participants will be recruited from Australia and Malaysia for comparison. Participants cover a range of religious, cultural, and political backgrounds. Data are being analysed using an inductive thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019).

Key Findings: Emerging UK themes include: 1) the role of relationships (both romantic and platonic) as a testing ground for masculine identities; 2) a nuanced and selective engagement with manosphere figures such as Andrew Tate (e.g., dismissing more extreme content whilst remaining receptive to messaging around self-improvement and financial independence); 3) financial provision as a core component of masculinity, regardless of wider ideological perspectives; and 4) masculinity-focused social media content as a source of both harmful narratives and valuable alternative perspectives on masculinity.

Contribution: This study contributes to our understanding of young men navigating contemporary masculinities. At a time when discussions around gender are polarising, this research gives voice to the complex give and take of life for young men in the UK.

Implications: Our preliminary findings have implications for mental health services, educational settings, and practitioners working with young men. A greater understanding of young men's priorities may facilitate the development of engagements that are more relevant to the needs of young men.

### Metabolizing Masculinity: Supplementation and Renewal in Men's Fitness Culture

Samantha King & Gavin Weedon
*Queen's University, Canada & Nottingham Trent University*
**15-minute presentation**

Sales of nutritional supplements are integral to the hustle and grift that define the contemporary manosphere. Here, we explore the biosocial work that supplements perform in this context. We trace the ecosystem of relationships connecting some of the manosphere's most prominent entrepreneurs, highlighting the chains of influence through which optimizing creeds and their corresponding supplements are promoted as responses to the perceived challenges of contemporary manhood. We argue that in the face of growing distrust of institutions, climate and labour precarity, and existential insecurity, supplement-fueled training of the body has become a salve for a wounded masculinity of sorts with links to a latent and emergent "microfascism" in which misogyny and whiteness are inherent. In this environment, products such as proteins, peptides, and polyphenols flow and connect across digital and offline spaces, acting as vibrant currencies and points of interaction and mutual recognition among men who might not otherwise connect. The work of supplements in this context is not simply discursive. To realize their promises requires constant physical labour and bodily renewal. In this way, ideals of restoration and regeneration that characterize microfascism work their way under the skin. Where self-recreation and control are paramount, supplements offer a vehicle to metabolize and embody those desires.

### "It's an attack on your manhood": navigating multimorbidity at midlife

Justine Krygier
*The University of Hull*
**5-minute update**

Men's experiences of multimorbidity (2 or more long-term physical and/or mental health conditions) remain underrepresented within critical studies of men and masculinities, despite evidence that multiple chronic health conditions are occurring earlier in the life course. This study explores the lived experiences of seventeen men aged 40–65 living in Hull, East Yorkshire, navigating the practical and emotional challenges of multimorbidity.

Adopting a qualitative methodology, the study used semi-structured narrative interviews, timelines, and participant-led object and photograph elicitation. Midlife is characterised by numerous roles, responsibilities, and pressures, including employment, caring responsibilities, and family commitments. The study considered how hegemonic masculine scripts, regional masculinities, socioeconomic structures, and shifting societal norms shaped men's identities, help-seeking behaviours, and self-worth. It also explored the impact of compromised social power resulting from illness and changing social expectations.

The research drew upon a dual theoretical framework of biographical disruption (Bury, 1982) and Erikson's (1950) concept of generativity versus stagnation. This was underpinned by a meta-critical lens attentive to cultural hegemony and the social construction of masculinity. Through narrative analysis, with particular attention to figurative language, the findings reveal that traditional masculine scripts can constrain emotional expression, help-seeking, and undermine wellbeing when men are unable to embody culturally endorsed masculine roles. Participants' narratives however, challenged normative portrayals of emotionally disengaged men and revealed how humour, generativity, caregiving, creativity, and age-related wisdom, facilitated emotional depth, resilience, and adaptability.

The study introduces the concept of *biographical recalibration*, describing how men re-evaluate priorities, relationships, and masculine identities following health-related disruption. It contributes to contemporary debates on masculinity by demonstrating how men negotiate vulnerability, identity, and social change, whilst highlighting the ways generativity can mitigate loss, marginalisation, and diminished self-worth in the context of multimorbidity and midlife.

## When Extremism Threatens the Gym Sharks: Young Men [En]Countering Hate in Fitness Spaces

Jason Luger
*Northumbria University*
**15-minute presentation**

Gyms and fitness spaces can be healthy, affirming environments for young men, yet research indicates they can also serve as a mainstreaming vector for extremism and forms of hate including antisemitism, Islamophobia, misogyny and homophobia. This paper identifies how extremist myths are invoked, articulated and re-articulated within online and offline fitness spaces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and assesses their potential danger to vulnerable young men, to cultural cohesion and to democratic values. Drawing on literature and archival review, digital ethnography and visual analysis, and site-based participatory observation, discussion workshops, interviews and focus groups with fitness, Prevent-CVE and educational stakeholders, it finds that more young men are at the gym than ever, that hateful content can be mainstreamed through fitness social media, and that awareness, education and prevention are necessary. It begins to develop a framework for addressing 'hateful myths' in the gym/fitness sector to benefit young men, practitioners and wider society.

## Embodied Masculinity after Sexual Trauma: Cultural Scripts and Intimacy among Male Survivors in Israel

Amos Nimni
*Bar Ilan University, Israel*
**Poster**

Research on childhood sexual abuse (CSA) among men has largely emphasized psychological consequences, while less attention has been given to how recovery unfolds through the body and

within culturally specific constructions of masculinity. This paper examines how male survivors negotiate embodiment, masculinity, and intimacy following sexual trauma.

The study draws on qualitative narrative interview with 25 Israeli men who experienced CSA, including secular Jewish, Ultra-Orthodox Jewish, and Arab participants. Using thematic analysis, the research explores how culturally embedded expectations of masculinity shape survivors' embodied experiences and relational trajectories.

Four recurring, non-linear domains emerged across participants' narratives: (1) body image and masculine self-worth, often marked by shame and bodily self-surveillance; (2) embodied dissociation and numbness, reflecting disruptions in sensation and emotional presence; (3) practices of safety and control, including bodily discipline and strategies to regulate vulnerability; and (4) intimacy and relationships, where survivors negotiate disclosure, trust, and the tension between sexuality and closeness.

The findings show that recovery is not solely an individual psychological process but a culturally situated negotiation of masculinity and embodiment. By integrating embodiment theory with intersectional masculinity studies, the study highlights how survivors reinterpret dominant masculine scripts to reconstruct agency, intimacy, and new forms of manhood.

### Loneliness among University Students as a Growing Concern

Youssouf Ousman & Thseen Nazir
*Global Studies University*

**Poster**

In this poster, we delve into a theoretical perspective on the prevalence of loneliness among university students. Despite previous research exploring various aspects of loneliness, there has been a general neglect in examining the effectiveness of various therapies specifically for university students. The poster begins by defining loneliness, exploring its types and causes, and highlighting its effects on university students. It then offers suggestions for alleviating loneliness through various strategies. A secondary objective is to emphasize the importance of universities providing support by organizing various social activities to unite students and encourage further research into effective methods of combating loneliness. The poster will review existing research to identify the causes of loneliness among university students, assess its impact on their lives, and suggest potential strategies to address it.

### Manual for Extravaganza: An approach to the construction of masculine identities that diverge from hegemony in Mexico

Guillermo León Ramírez-Martínez & Guillermo García-Meraz
*Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City*

**Poster**

Pride marches around the world are a stage for the display of diverse collective identities. The participating groups and individuals use fantasy and extravaganza as a way to challenge gender norms, but also as a form of resistance against the hegemonic system that oppresses gender nonconformity.

“La marcha,” as it’s commonly known in Mexico City, draws all kinds of people, who come not only from different parts of the city but also from all over the country. To attend, some people create elaborate outfits that reflect cultural references they associate with dissent, but also with local camp culture and fantasy. “La marcha” has thus become a space where the celebration is a powerful political statement that exalts the existence of diverse masculinities.

The aim of this study is to examine some of the identities present in the Mexico City Pride March, through photographic documentation and in-depth interviews, to find some of the references to local popular culture present in the reconfiguration of masculinities that diverge from the hegemonic norm.

Examining how, over time, cultural references that construct gender identities diverge from hegemony in Mexico or are transformed allows us to understand the evolution of queer culture and its signifiers, as well as interconnect with different concepts of post- and decolonization of references in the construction of collective identities in Latin America.

### Between Automatism and Care: Masculinities, Gender-Based Violence and Reflexive Groups in Brazil

Eduardo Azevedo Rebouças

*Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM), Brazil*

**15-minute presentation**

Despite growing legal frameworks addressing gender-based violence in Brazil, rates of domestic violence remain alarmingly high. This presentation draws on two interconnected studies conducted in Manaus, Amazonas, examining how hegemonic masculinities sustain gender-based violence and how Brazilian perpetrator intervention programmes (known in Brazil as GRHAVs) can illuminate broader possibilities for prevention. The first study employed focus groups, online image-based questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with young university men, mapping how masculinity patterns are expressed and reproduced in everyday life. Those men reveal a persistent gap between discourse and practice: they readily condemn violence in the abstract yet continue reproducing violent patterns in their own relationships. This pendulation, captures how men move between hegemonic masculinity models and moments of questioning without effective rupture. The second extended this inquiry through ethnographic research within GRHAVs over multiple years, producing case narratives and theoretical analysis of group dynamics. While the interview context provokes a momentary "brake", an involuntary pause in automatism, it does not generate the sustained reflection needed for real transformation. In contrast, men engaged in GRHAVs undergo a gradual collective process that moves beyond toward genuine accountability for their own actions. Even men who have already committed violence demonstrate, through this process, the capacity for care, reshaping relational patterns. If this transformation is possible after violence has occurred, the findings raise a compelling question: how much more effective could such approaches be if applied preventively, before violence takes root? Situated in the Amazonian context and informed by decolonial perspectives, this presentation proposes care not as a therapeutic technique but as a relational and political practice. It calls for prevention strategies that engage men early, not waiting for violence to justify interventions, with implications for policy, education and interdisciplinary dialogue on masculinities today.

### From Amour-Propre to Amour de Soi: Rousseau as a Guide for Modern Masculinities

Michael J. Rovito & James E. Leone

*University of Central Florida & Bridgewater State University*

**5-minute update (presenting virtually)**

Contemporary men and boys navigate a paradox. Cultural scripts equate worth with dominance, achievement, and emotional restraint, even as loneliness, suicide, and disengagement from care intensify. This presentation argues that Jean-Jacques Rousseau, writing nearly 300 years ago, offers an underexplored framework for reimagining masculinity in a positive, health-promoting direction. Central is Rousseau's distinction between *amour-propre,* a competitive, comparison-driven self-

regard dependent on external validation, and *amour de soi*, an intrinsic, non-competitive self-respect oriented toward wellbeing. Dominant masculine norms, amplified by social media and online communities sometimes grouped as the "manosphere," cultivate *amour-propre*, producing performance, alienation, and the suppression of empathy and vulnerability. Drawing Rousseau into dialogue with bell hooks' critique of patriarchal socialization and Habermas's theory of communicative action, the paper reframes men's health not as a problem of individual behavior change but as a question about the social contract itself: what kind of society produces men who cannot seek connection without threatening their identity? Reading *Émile* and *The Social Contract* alongside contemporary men's health scholarship, we sketch developmental and institutional pathways, across education, workplaces, and healthcare, that nurture *amour de soi* rather than enforce *amour-propre*. Rather than battling masculinity as a monolith, this Rousseauian model embraces duality: vulnerability and strength, independence and interdependence, yielding plural, non-hierarchical masculinities united by a shared orientation toward flourishing. We close by arguing that meaningful change requires not better messaging but moral re-education and a renewed civic discourse positioning men's wellbeing as essential to the collective good.

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...Our thesis is straightforward: Rousseau offered the world a critique of human behavior that closely resembles the questions and concerns contemporary society still wrestles with, particularly regarding men and boys. The modern man can learn a great deal from someone who lived and wrote more than 300 years ago. Perhaps we don't need to invent something new to understand how masculinities ebb and flow today. Perhaps some of the most impactful directions reside in our past.

## "I want to be normal like everyone else": Virginity loss and developmental masculinity among incels

David S. Smith
*Robert Gordon University*

**15-minute presentation**

Virginity loss is widely regarded as a turning point in a person's social and sexual development; hence, adult virginity is associated with a range of adverse mental health outcomes. This pattern appears to be particularly true among men, for whom it is typically seen as a source of public and self-stigma. This talk combines literature on developmental masculinity with interview and forum-based research into online involuntary celibate ("incel") communities to argue that incel discourses around virginity loss represent an exaggerated variant of common male anxieties. Incel spaces are associated with men who attribute their lack of sexual and romantic relationships to the transformative impact of feminism, as well as a natural genetic disadvantage. The worldview has been linked to misogyny, gendered harassment and, in some instances, acts of extreme violence. Through accounts of both current and former incels, I explore the significance of virginity loss through the lens of the social clock: a normative schedule that shapes individuals' expectations for the timing of transitionary stages, including sexual maturity. Among young men, this construct can serve as a source of validation or shame when they compare themselves to their peers and dominant masculine archetypes. It can also underpin forms of virgin shaming, when men police and stigmatise perceived failures of masculinity in themselves or others. Data suggests that, to incels, the expectation that they *should* be sexual is core to their sense of inferiority and relational failure. I further examine how incel forums and content creators construct misogynistic narratives around this masculinity strain.

## Effects of gay community stress on self-objectification and psychological distress among sexual minority men in Hong Kong

CHAN Chun Ho Randolph, SUEN Yiu Tung (presenting author), and WONG Miu Yin

*The Chinese University of Hong Kong*

**Poster**

Engaging in the gay community provides support and affirmation, but it is often overlooked that some sexual minority men may experience stress from status-based competition within the mainstream gay community. These pressures are more prevalent among sexual minority men with lower social and sexual status, who are frequently devalued and excluded by other members of the community. Such experiences can be more psychologically impactful than rejection by mainstream society. This study investigated the relationship between gay community stress and psychological distress among sexual minority men and examined the mediating role of self-objectification. The sample consisted of 626 cisgender sexual minority men from Hong Kong. The results showed that gay community stress, particularly related to perceptions of the community's focus on sex and social competition, was associated with reduced self-esteem and increased depression and anxiety symptoms. Self-objectification, manifesting through body surveillance and shame, mediated the relationship between gay community stress and psychological distress. Additionally, group comparisons revealed that feminine-presenting, larger-bodied, and lower-income men reported higher stress levels. The association between gay community stress and psychological distress was particularly pronounced among bisexual and pansexual men, those with lower masculinity, and those with higher BMI. This study provides crucial insights for developing targeted mental health interventions and gay community organizing strategies. Our findings call for a transformative approach to creating more inclusive and supportive gay communities that celebrate diversity in gender expression and body size, while actively working to reduce the negative impacts of gay community stress on mental health among sexual minority men with multiple marginalized identities.

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## "Making me feel like a dad again": A Father-Child Programme and Fatherhood Identity in Scottish Prisons

Thomas, L., Brown, A., Hunt, K., Ashton, L., Morgan, P.J., Chambers, S., Crowther, J., Demou, E., Maclean, J., McMeekin, N., Treweek, S., Young, M.D., MacLean, A., and Gray, C.M.

*University of Stirling*

**15-minute presentation**

Context: Men who are in prison can experience challenges to their identity as fathers. Nearly half of imprisoned men lose contact with their families, and the prison environment offers limited opportunities for the kind of active, playful parenting that shapes father-child relationships and men's sense of themselves as "good" fathers. Children of imprisoned parents are at heightened risk of poor mental health, educational difficulties and future offending.

Aim: To examine how a structured father-child programme in Scottish prisons supported imprisoned men to maintain or build their paternal identity, mental wellbeing, and family relationships.

Methods: Healthy Dads Healthy Kids in Prisons (HDHK-P) is an eight-week programme comprising education, co-physical activity sessions and family meals. Four pilot deliveries were conducted in two Scottish prisons with 30 fathers and 44 children. Qualitative data from session observations, and interviews with fathers, caregivers and staff were analysed thematically.

Key findings: HDHK-P was highly acceptable to fathers, family members and staff. Fathers described how HDHK-P allowed them to experience and express themselves as active, caring parents - interactions that contrasted markedly with the emotional and relational constraints of the

prison environment. The programme was reported to have improved fathers' mood, self-esteem and parenting confidence. Staff and caregivers observed increased confidence and reduced anxiety in children. Peer support among fathers, and between families, created a supportive micro-community - by shared experience and mutual support - among fathers, caregivers, children and staff. Fathers described HDHK-P as motivation to make or maintain positive behaviour changes, including being motivated to maintain good behaviour in prison to protect their continued participation in HDHK-P.

Contribution/Implications: HDHK-P demonstrates that prison settings can provide a structured, meaningful space for men to engage with active and emotionally-present fatherhood. The findings demonstrated that programmes could impact on men's identity as fathers, and their mental health and family relationships in challenging environments.

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### Masculinity and Mental Illness Onscreen

Christina Wilkins
*University of Birmingham*

**15-minute presentation**

Men struggling with mental illness have been part of screen culture since its inception: for instance, this is included in two of Méliès films at the turn of the 20th century (*Suicide of Colonel Henry* and *The Dreyfus Affair*, both 1899). However, what it looks like, and whether the male experience of suicide and mental illness is classified explicitly as 'mental illness', continues to change. This is complicated by several factors: men are less likely to seek help for mental illness (Addis & Hoffman, 2017) and men's depression may look different to what is expected by diagnostic tools and so may not be picked up (Rutz, 1995). Fictional representations in film and television reinforce this through presenting men with mental illness or suicidal thoughts as secondary, failing in a masculine role, and as a burden. This paper explores the work done in my recent monograph, *Male Mental Illness in Contemporary Culture (2025)*. It argues that fictional representations onscreen do not offer much engagement with men's *experience* of mental illness and suicidal thoughts, and therefore uphold the stigma attached to it. It is presented as something shameful, as is the emotion attached to it, which is rarely shown in detail. This, I argue, is due to masculine norms. Despite charity campaigns for 'awareness' of male mental health (such as CALM), the presentation of men's mental health onscreen has not significantly changed, which may undermine the work done beyond the screen. Despite this, I argue there is some hope in television, but I also offer some thoughts on where to go to improve these representations further.

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